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THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
IRAQI AGGRESSION AND THE CONTINUED OCCUPATION OF KUWAIT IN FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF THE CHARTER OF THE UNITED NATIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-sixth year

Letter dated 19 February 1991 from the Permanent Representative of Egypt to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of an address delivered by President Hosni Mubarak, President of the Arab Republic of Egypt, to the joint meeting of the People's Assembly and the Shura (Advisory) Council held on 24 January 1991.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 35 and 153, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Amre MOUSSA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Address by President Muhammad Hosni Mubarak to the joint meeting of the People's Assembly and the Shura (Advisory) Council concerning developments in the Gulf war, 24 January 1991

In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Brothers and sisters, members of the People's Assembly and the Shura Council,

All of us here under this dome in the house of the people, and throughout this land under the Egyptian sky, are aware that for the past six months we have been witnessing the most crucial events in history to take place on Arab land. I decided to invite you to this historic meeting in accordance with article 132 of the Constitution and in recognition of the national responsibility invested in our democratic structure, which enjoins the person who bears primary responsibility for the will of the people to inform the masses and their representatives of all facts relating to his responsibility in conformity with his constitutional oath and his fulfilment of the trust invested in him.

Popular participation is thus ensured in interaction with events, particularly at a time when we stand before a historic turning-point which has formidable consequences in both the present and the future.

The address which I delivered to you on the opening of the new legislative session on 15 December 1990 included a review of Egypt's position with respect to the Iraqi forces' occupation of Kuwait. It also included an account of Egypt's response to the appeal of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for Egyptian forces to be sent to defend those two fraternal countries, to which we are linked by the closest of ties and the firmest of relations.

The Treaty of Arab joint defence

The decision to send Egyptian units to help defend those two countries and other Arab States in the Gulf was an inevitable and unequivocal decision, taken in the light of our manifest contractual obligations, which we apply with all due seriousness and rigour. This people respects the law and the rule of legitimacy, upholds established rules and principles and abides by all the pacts and treaties into which it enters.

As you know, the Treaty of Arab joint defence adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States on 13 April 1950 provides, in article 2, that States parties shall consider any act of armed aggression against any one or more of those States or against their forces to be an act of aggression against all such States.

Accordingly, pursuant to their legitimate individual and collective right of self-defence, they undertake to provide assistance to the State or States attacked and immediately to take - both individually and collectively - all necessary steps,

and to use all means at their disposal, including the use of armed force, to repulse the aggression in order to restore security and peace.

The Treaty was submitted to both houses of the legislative authority prevailing at that time. It was adopted by the Council of Representatives on 11 June 1951 and approved by the Senate on 16 July 1951.

Egypt deposited the instrument of ratification of the Treaty with the Secretariat of the League of Arab States on 22 November 1952. The Treaty thus became law, requiring veneration and respect from the public authorities and all individuals.

Accordingly, when I took my decision to send these military units to help those two fraternal countries defend themselves against the threat of aggression, and when I announced this decision to the citizens on 18 August 1990, I was complying with an established legal obligation. That obligation is to be fulfilled and implemented, without the need for any additional measure, once the representatives of the people have spoken and expressed the people's determination and decision. I subsequently strove to explain all aspects of the matter in the address which I delivered on the opening of the new session of the People's Assembly on 15 December in order to ensure that you - and, through you, every citizen in the land of Egypt - was acquainted with the considerations which made the dispatch of those units necessary and inevitable in the light of our irrefutable legal commitments.

The resolutions adopted by the Arab summit conference held at Cairo on 10 August contained an affirmation of the commitment by States members of the League of Arab States to the three Security Council resolutions which had been adopted by the time the conference was held. This demonstrated the close linkage and determined organic cohesion between Arab and international legitimacy. This linkage is not confined to formal aspects alone but extends to the essence underlying the commitment of nations and peoples to the fundamental codes and principles which govern international relations, the intention being that dealings between States should not degenerate into chaos, thus allowing tyrannical power to prevail and to hold sway over what is manifestly right and yielding to the law of the jungle. That would be a dreadful fate.

Faithful to these divine rules and principles, the units of our armed forces proceeded to their positions in Arab territory, sustained by the support of every Egyptian who takes pride in his nation and his community, who is sincere in his commitment to promises and pacts and understands the crucial significance of the consequences and complications which must ensue from the occupation of a fraternal Arab country, from an attempt to erase its identity as a State and a nation and from the threat of naked aggression against the other fraternal Arab countries of the Gulf region in like manner to that employed against Kuwait.

The hearts and minds of every honourable Egyptian go out to our brave men, performing their national duty with absolute courage and faith and fulfilling a great mission which will be recorded in glittering script on the pages of history, whether or not this is to the liking of the spiteful and the arrogant.

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Salutations from this rostrum to those heroes. Salutations to men who have sworn an oath to themselves that they will sacrifice their lives to serve the cause of their community.

Salutations to those of our sons who raise their heads proudly to the highest heaven. Salutations to those who bear the banners of liberation, dignity and pride. Salutations to those of whom we boast throughout the ages and from generation to generation as shields for the people, protectors of its resources and a glowing symbol of all the divine values and lofty principles for which we live. I address salutations to each and every one of them, in all their different ranks and categories, on behalf of every citizen in the land of Egypt ... on behalf of all fathers and mothers ... on behalf of sons ... on behalf of those brothers and sisters whose hearts pray to God Almighty that they will fulfil their mission in the best possible manner and return safely to their homeland.

While we are proud of those of our brave sons who uphold what is right and destroy what is false, we may also be proud that we are all from the same eternal land of Egypt, whose national soil has ever been enlightened by the civilization of the great Egyptian people ... the people of Egypt ... every generation and denomination of the Egyptian people, which has since the first moments of these momentous events, demonstrated the highest level of vigilance for the values of civilization by specifying its clear and categorical position, drawing inspiration from its humanitarian heritage over thousands of years. It was not deceived by false witness, despite the mendacious lustre in which it was enveloped. Its rational thinking was not disturbed by the hollow slogans designed to belittle its intelligence. By spontaneous and manifest consensus, it rejected all the spurious arguments in support of the unlawful armed devastation by an Arab State of the land of a fraternal Arab people. Indeed, the people as a whole urged its leadership not to wait even one day or part of a day before declaring Egypt's decision to denounce the aggression and to take the most immediate steps to eliminate its consequences.

I was never for one moment isolated from a full sense of the pulse of the people in every decision we took and in every contact we made, both before the Iraqi armed invasion and after it, right up until the present. The dictates of responsibility and desire for the success of our aspirations made it impossible for us to declare many of our measures and contacts in order that we might best prepare the ground for the achievement of our principal and ultimate aim, namely, the attainment of peace and the avoidance of war. However, the ruler of Iraq insisted, with extraordinary stubbornness, on propelling the region towards an awful catastrophe. God knows how much we tried, with all the strength at our disposal, on both the Arab and international levels, to protect the army, people and land of Iraq from disaster and its torments, and to protect our Arab present and the future of our Arab community in both the short and the long term from its profound negative consequences. The time has come today for me to present you and the great Egyptian people with a brief statement of what we have done in this regard in the course of three phases:

First phase: Before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990;

Second phase: From the invasion until the adoption of Security Council resolution 678 (1990) on 29 November 1990, authorizing the use of international force to bring about a withdrawal from Kuwait and the restoration of legitimate authority if Iraq did not withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991;

Third phase: From the adoption of that resolution until 15 January 1991, which served as the dividing line between peace and war, and up to the time when I stand before you now.

The meeting in Baghdad on 24 July 1990

As you know, the crisis began to develop in July 1990 at the meeting of the Council of Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs in Tunis. The Iraqi Minister for Foreign Affairs presented a note containing accusations that Kuwait was conspiring against Iraq and seeking to do it harm. The Government of Kuwait then informed us that there were concentrations of Iraqi forces on that country's border and asked us to play a part in addressing the issue.

I therefore contacted the Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, on the afternoon of 23 July and told him I wanted to meet him in Baghdad the next day. We had a private meeting ... I repeat, a private meeting between him and myself alone ... on the morning of 24 July. At this meeting, he said to me, literally: "Abu Ala, the rulers of Kuwait are terrified even though I have no intention of taking any military action. I think you can take the opportunity to get anything you want from them, to strike while the iron is hot." (I also put this in my letter to him.) He continued: "Because they will comply with your requests, they will respond differently from the way in which they treated you in the past."

We did not at the time have the slightest intention of asking for anything from the Government of Kuwait, or from any other quarter. We are not opportunists. It was my purpose to extinguish the flame which had begun to burn in relations between Iraq and Kuwait, threatening all the beliefs which we had transmitted to our children concerning Arab solidarity and the unity of interest and destiny between all Arab peoples.

With absolute candour and avoiding any indirectness, I addressed President Saddam about the military concentrations. He quite distinctly used these exact words in reply: "If I wanted to invade Kuwait, I would not need to mass Iraqi forces. My only aim is to frighten them and put pressure on them so that they meet our requests."

I suggested that all the subjects of dispute between the two countries should be discussed at talks to be held in Jeddah, to be followed up in Baghdad and Kuwait. He accepted this proposal after long discussions in private meeting which lasted for about three hours.

He said he hoped to reach a satisfactory settlement as a result of these talks. I travelled on to Kuwait the same day and from there to Saudi Arabia, informing the Amir of Kuwait and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques accordingly. Everyone was reassured, particularly since the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz, had received a similar confirmation from President Saddam that there would be no war or military assault and that he had no intention whatsoever of engaging in any military action against Kuwait. He also confided this decision to other countries, including the Soviet Union, the United States and some African countries.

I took pains to advise both parties that they should show flexibility and broadmindedness in adddressing the differences between them, because the important thing was to preserve Arab unity and cohesion in the face of the enormous challenges confronting us all. It was my feeling that the two parties had accepted that sincere advice, offered freely out of loyalty to God and the community.

In accordance with the agreement, the Iraqi and Kuwaiti delegations arrived in Jeddah on Tuesday, 31 July. The first round of talks was confined, on the part of the Iraqis to the presentation by Mr. Izzat Ibrahim, Vice-Chairman of the Iraqi Revolution Command Council, of an extremely brief review of Iraq's position with respect to actions by Kuwait - from his point of view - whereupon the Iraqi official said he was not interested in hearing Kuwait's views at that meeting. A second meeting was agreed upon and held on the afternoon of Wednesday, 1 August 1990, i.e. one day before the assault, at which there was a brief exchange between the two delegations. The leader of the Iraqi delegation afterwards complained that he was tired and could not go into any further details. The meeting thus ended, with talks to be resumed in Baghdad and then Kuwait in accordance with the prior agreement.

The Iraqi delegation left Saudi Arabia at approximately 10 p.m. Exactly four hours later, at 2 a.m. on the morning of 2 August, after midnight, the armed Iraqi invasion began.

The distressing thing, brothers and sisters, is that the Iraqi President adopted such an extraordinary position in the spoken and written messages which we exchanged after the invasion. I had not mentioned these before today. He categorically denied that he had promised me he would not invade Kuwait. He claimed that he was intending not to resort to force if the bilateral talks had succeeded. This is a blatant distortion of the truth. Nothing more clearly demonstrates its untruth than the awareness of the entire world that the invasion was premeditated. It was timed to begin four hours after the end of the exploratory negotiating session in Jeddah, which was to have been followed by further sessions in Baghdad and then Kuwait.

Saving the situation

Never in ancient or modern history have we seen talks between two countries to solve their problems limited to just one or two preliminary meetings for it then to be said that they ended in deadlock.

On the day of the invasion, only hours after it occurred, specifically at 2.20 p.m. on 2 August 1990, King Hussein contacted me and asked if he could come and meet me immediately in Alexandria, following the hasty departure from Cairo of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates. I welcomed his proposal, thinking that we might be able to save the situation.

He arrived at 6 p.m. After an uninterrupted discussion with him, I suggested - this being a personal suggestion of mine which did not originate from any other source - that an Arab mini-summit conference should be held in Jeddah within the next few days, to be attended by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz, President Saddam Hussein and certain other Arab leaders.

My objective in convening such a conference (this being my own initiative), was to agree on measures by which Iraq might extricate itself from its predicament, while saving face, the idea being that the Iraqi President should let us know privately that he agreed to the principle of withdrawal from Kuwait and the restoration of its legitimate authority before I called for the conference. This would be to assure me because, if I called for a conference without agreement on these two points, there would be no response to the call.

While King Hussein was still with me at the Ras al-Tin Palace in Alexandria, I telephoned President Saddam Hussein and told him that I had reached agreement with the King on the principle that a mini-summit should be held on the basis of two points which would be conveyed to him by the King during his visit to Baghdad on 3 August, i.e. the day following the invasion.

After my telephone call, I continued talking to the King and told him that I would put out a low-key statement of Egypt's demand for withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority. The King asked me to postpone the statement in order to prevent its publication undermining his efforts in Baghdad on the day after the invasion.

He also asked me to try to delay the issuance of any similar statement from the Council of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the League of Arab States, which was meeting in Cairo on the very day of the invasion. In the presence of the King, I telephoned a number of Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs during their meeting in Cairo and asked them to postpone their statements until 6 p.m. the next day, 3 August, in order to give King Hussein a full opportunity to try and save the situation.

I accepted this and complied, despite knowing that all sections of Egyptian society would blame us for not declaring Egypt's position concerning this flagrant act of aggression. Such a delay was inconsistent with Egypt's role and position both in the Arab world and the world as a whole. Our membership of the Arab Cooperation Council (and the fact that I personally had been on the move between so many places) did not mean that we should turn a blind eye to such aggression against an Arab State and an Arab people. However, I put up with it and bided my time.

Withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority

At 10.20 a.m. the next day, Friday, 3 August, I spoke with King Hussein in Amman before he travelled to Baghdad. I explained to him the importance of obtaining President Saddam's rapid agreement, in particular, to the two basic points of the meeting, i.e. withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority. King Hussein went to Baghdad and met President Saddam. After returning to Amman, he contacted me at 4.30 p.m. the same day and told me that the Iraqis had agreed to attend the mini-summit, which I took as good news. I asked the King whether President Saddam had undertaken to withdraw from Kuwait and not to interfere with the legitimate Government. To my extreme surprise, King Hussein replied that he had not discussed any details with President Saddam. The whole idea of convening a summit thus collapsed, and I was not able to invite Arab leaders to meet in Jeddah.

If the Iraqi ruler persisted in his refusal to withdraw and his determination to annex Kuwait to Iraq, what reason was there for us to meet? This was the response of many Heads of State. Did he think that I had proposed the mini-summit in order to give our blessing to the occupation?!

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that the hopes we had invested in King Hussein's mission to Baghdad had not been fulfilled, the statement issued by the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on my instructions on the afternoon of Friday, 3 August, did not include any condemnation of Iraq. It confined itself to expressing sorrow at what had happened and to calling for withdrawal, the restoration of legitimate authority and an amicable settlement of the differences between the two countries.

It was always our intention to hold out hope for an Arab solution and to avoid any international involvements. The international community had taken rapid and decisive action from the very first day of the aggression, more quickly than we did as Arabs. The Security Council convened and adopted unanimous resolutions condemning the invasion, calling for immediate withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority and imposing an economic embargo. I became more apprehensive that all hope of an Arab solution would be lost. My overriding concern was to warn the Iraqi President against opening the doors, by virtue of his obdurate position, to further intervention by the international community in a manner which could develop beyond the framework of the economic embargo.

I decided it would be better to make direct contact with the Iraqi leadership. I called in Iraq's Ambassador to Cairo on Monday, 6 August, and sent him on a private aircraft with an urgent message to President Saddam Hussein. In that message, I urged the President to display flexibility and to accept withdrawal from Kuwait in preparation for the restoration of legitimate authority. I warned him that the international community, both West and East together, had begun to move against Iraq and that the Security Council had adopted unanimous resolutions of condemnation for which there was no precedent.

Building a new world

In my letter, I told him quite clearly that there was no way of creating a split in the international community between East and West. (There no longer was any such thing as East and West. In the past, when we did anything, we used to go to the East and ask them to stand with us against the West, and before that to the West to stand against the East.) There was no more East or West because the international situation had in recent years seen radical changes in the nature of relations between the great Powers.

It had been agreed among us that a new world should be built, free of conflict and wars, and there was no longer any State which would accept the occupation by military force of another's territory.

I told him in my letter that I was willing to cooperate with him fully in any measure that would save his face and spare the Arab family from danger in order to eliminate the possibility of international intervention.

The reply, brothers and sisters, from President Saddam Hussein was quite blunt. Kuwait was a part of Iraq and there was absolutely no way of amending the decision to annex it. The next day, Tuesday, 7 August, an envoy from the Iraqi President, Mr. Izzat Ibrahim, Vice-Chairman of the Revolution Command Council, arrived in Egypt. I received him in Alexandria. He told me that President Saddam had received my letter and that Iraq considered its annexation of Kuwait to be final and irrevocable, not open to any negotiation or concession, because it constituted a part of Iraqi national soil. I spent a long time with him explaining the need to keep the door open to any change in the situation arising from the invasion and not to treat any action taken since the invasion as final or irrevocable. I warned him of the dreadful consequences that would inevitably ensue from the adoption of a rigid position which did not take account of the consequences.

I told him to inform President Saddam Hussein quite clearly that, if he maintained this position, it would be impossible to repair the dangerous imbalance created by the occupation, that the situation would grow worse and deteriorate and that the whole world would oppose the invasion, constituting as it did a dangerous precedent which threatened the very fabric of the international community.

On 8 August, after telephone calls from President Hafez al-Assad, President Chadli Bendjedid and Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, I called for an Arab summit conference to be convened. They asked for the conference to be held at the earliest opportunity in the hope of attaining an Arab solution to the crisis.

I decided to call in the Iraqi Ambassador for a second time and asked him to tell President Saddam Hussein, at my request, that he should send an authorized high-level delegation, if he himself was unable to attend the Cairo summit, in order to extricate Iraq from its predicament. I said that I was willing to devise a formula at the conference which would call for withdrawal from Kuwait and the restoration of legitimate authority, without damaging the dignity of Iraq in its courageous decision, if the idea of holding the summit was adopted. In my letter,

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I begged him to ensure that the Iraqi delegation was empowered to take a flexible position such as to permit a breakthrough in the crisis, in preparation for an Arab solution. On the afternoon of Thursday, 9 August, I received the head of the Iraqi delegation, whose message consisted of one single assertion: that Kuwait was an inseparable part of Iraq, that there could be no going back or reconsideration for any reason whatsoever and that Iraq considered its decision to be a national decision and thus not open to discussion at the Arab level (before the Arab summit on Saturday). He said that he was attending the conference to discuss the Arab situation in general (under tutelage). There was no comment we could make on this request other than to express deep regret that Iraq should adopt such a position, which would allow no freedom of movement to Arab leaders and leave them with but one alternative. Despite all this, I did not give up hope and made numerous calls to the Kings and Heads of State attending the summit conference, with a view to reducing tension and paving the way for an amicable understanding between the two parties. I tried in every way to avert any call for a split or schism and endeavoured to ensure that the Iraqi delegation was treated with full respect upon its arrival and in the course of the proceedings. I spoke to all those present, explained the seriousness of the situation and said that it was our objective to attain an Arab decision at the conference, thus preventing the crisis from leading to more threatening developments in the international situation.

The Arab summit conference was held on the Friday. In my address to the conference, I deliberately upheld Iraq's dignity and kept the door open for any breakthrough which would allow the Iraqi delegation to show flexibility in its position. I did not show partiality to either side to the exclusion of the other. In my address, I said that the conference was not intended to be a forum in which to embarrass the fraternal country of Iraq and in which to direct accusations against it in any shape or form. I also said that we all felt affection for Iraq and that not one of us would wish to abandon any of the basic elements of our Arab foundation. God knew that this affection for Iraq, its achievements and its leadership was the reason why we had all striven to contain the crisis. I also said that the Arab umbrella designed to resolve the predicament constituted the safe and sure choice which we had all undertaken to accept when we signed the Pact of the League of Arab States and the Treaty of joint defence. The way was open for us to reach agreement and we had at our disposal formulas by which we could put an end to the crisis within a matter of days. When one member proposed that an Arab delegation consisting of several Heads of State should be sent to Baghdad to meet President Saddam Hussein in the hope of attaining a solution, I asked those members who had put their names to the proposal to serve as members of the delegation. They included King Hussein. They all responded categorically in the negative, and the decision was taken accordingly. I do not want at this stage to reveal many things about the behaviour of the Iraqi delegation, the insults to which it gave voice after the conference or the actions of some who attempted to sabotage the conference. I do not want today to exacerbate the tragedy of the split in Arab ranks. This tragedy is already sufficient.

A true witness to history

Brothers and sisters, I offer you, the people and all Arab peoples these details, which I have endeavoured to abbreviate as far as I am able. This is a true witness to history, in order that all those who have been deceived by allegations and lies may learn the facts, stripped bare of caprice and self-interest. In every contact we had with the Iraqi President both before and after the invasion, and even in the course of our direct contacts with him after the adoption of the Arab summit resolutions and my repeated appeals to him (a final total of 26 appeals in all), neither he, his envoys nor his written messages to us once made mention of the Palestinian people's cause. At no time did he himself, his letters or his representatives say one word about the cause of the Palestinian people, about Israel or about a solution of all problems of the Arab region.

All these assertions appeared in what he called his initiative to solve Arab problems, the form and content of which is nothing more than a manoeuvre to deceive the Arab peoples, to stir up their feelings, to hitch their support to the occupation of Kuwait and to obliterate that country's identity.

The whole thing was a surprise to us and to all those who attended the summit conference in Baghdad, held on 29 May 1990. All of you will remember that President Saddam Hussein had presented the Amir and ruler of Kuwait with the highest order of the State in honour of the positive role which Kuwait had played in supporting Iraq during its war with Iran and in recognition of its splendid service.

Indeed, he went so far at the banquet which he held for the Kings and Heads of State (he was sitting next to him) to say that he had told his children that, if they were overtaken by any misfortune, they should look to their uncle, the Amir of Kuwait, for he was their brother and friend.

I tell you once again. After the Arab summit resolutions which were rejected by the ruler of Iraq, I did not give up hope of giving him sincere advice, which might be of benefit to us all, might save the Iraqi people, protect the Iraqi army and spare all Arab territory from the catastrophe of war. On 19 August 1990, I called in the Iraqi Ambassador once again and asked him to communicate my request to him. The tenor of all my requests was that he should consider once again a solution to extricate himself from this predicament. I warned him of the dangers of war in all candour, sincerity and good faith. Over and over again I explained that all the world's Powers rejected the principle of occupation by military force, now that a new world had been shaped on a foundation of peace. There was a new order in the world. I told him in my spoken message that Iraq would never be able to stand up to all the world's Powers and that I was prepared to make any contacts or take any initiatives which Iraq thought would provide a way out of the current dangerous situation, in order to avert any of the dreadful consequences which none of us desired. A written reply reached me on 23 August. To my surprise, he repeated that he considered the action of the Al Sabah family to be equivalent to acts of war, following the failure of the political endeavours in Jeddah. He had decided to restore Iraq's usurped right, to correct what was wrong and aberrant (all this is what he said after the invasion) and to remove a lethal germ from the

body of Iraq and from the body of the community. Praise be to God for this occurrence. (These were his words, meaning he praised the Lord for what had happened. He had removed the germ, so matters were in order.) These were his words.

We have good relations with the entire world

He denied in his letter that he had promised not to use force. He then accused me of submitting to Saudi/American pressure. He was unaware that we do not submit to pressure from any State in the world whatsoever. We cooperate with all nations of the world from the farthest East to the West, from West to East and from North to South. We have good relations and we work together with all nations of the world without exception.

He said that I had committed an offence against the Arab community and the principles of the Islamic religion, which could not associate with what was false. Beloved Kuwait had returned to its noble kin, with the result that it and the positions surrounding and emanating from it had become a banner of glory for all Arabs (that was his point of view).

Brothers, I was amazed by this letter. (I read these letters for hours and still I cannot believe they are real.) What I do know is that Saddam Hussein tried to establish the best possible relations with the United States (involving himself personally). He had asked us on previous occasions to approach the American leadership (this was true), to affirm his assertion that he was a man of peace and that he did not want to cause the slightest upset in Iraqi-American relations. He also corrected his statements to the effect that he would destroy Israel and denied that he had said any such thing. He affirmed that he would respond against Israel if it attacked Iraq and went so far as to tell me literally (this I declare as a witness to history) that there was no direct conflict between Iraq and Israel (this was in a private conversation between me and him) and that there was absolutely no reason for him to attack Israel because there would be no justification for such an attack (these are the words of President Saddam Hussein). All Iraq could do was offer assistance to Jordan or Egypt if Israel attacked either of them, and if they so requested. Otherwise, he was not interested in Israel. With respect to the United States, he stated in his letter to me that, at his meeting with the American Ambassador in Baghdad to confirm his good relations with the United States, he told her that he would never seek to increase the price of oil. As you all know, he had previously instructed a professor at an American university to tell the Israeli leaders in Tel Aviv that he bore no grudge against Israel and had no intention of launching any aggression against it.

Why then did they accuse us of being under Saudi/American pressure, when he was constantly trying to ensure good relations with the United States and was pleased that we had intervened to eliminate any misunderstanding between him and the American White House?

This was a big mistake in his reading of the situation. He thought that improving his relations with the United States would mean America's subsequent blessing for his occupation of Kuwait. But if Egypt adopted a principled position in conformity with international law, then Egypt was subject to American pressure. Did France put pressure on us too? Did the Soviet Union put pressure on us? Did Britain put pressure on us? Did Italy put pressure on us? Did all the nations of Western and Eastern Europe put pressure on us? Did the nations of the third world and Islamic States put pressure on us? Were we subject to pressure from the United Nations General Assembly, which adopted a unanimous resolution calling for Iraqi withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority? What about the pressure from Saudi Arabia?

The non-aggression treaty

Saddam Hussein was on the best of terms with Saudi Arabia, but he suddenly asked the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz, during one of his visits to Iraq, to conclude a non-aggression treaty between the two countries. (I was astonished by what I heard and asked King Fahd what it was all about. He told me that he too had been surprised but, when he saw that was it, he agreed to sign.) At the time, King Fahd wondered why such a treaty should be concluded, particularly since the agreement on joint defence between Arab States already served that purpose. (All of us can join in non-aggression agreements with each other if we distrust each other so much. If that is the case, I should sign a non-aggression treaty with everyone around me: no one trusts anyone else, or some plot is being hatched.) However, he complied and signed the treaty, despite his great astonishment. Events later demonstrated that it had been his intention to deceive the Saudi ruler at a time when he was actually planning aggression against Kuwait. He later sent Iraqi army forces up to the Saudi border after the invasion of Kuwait, thus making the Saudis see the threat from this same person who had undertaken not to attack Kuwait. That was why they called in the Arab and international forces to help protect and defend their territory.

President Saddam also said in his letter to me that to restore Kuwait to its previous condition would mean Iraq falling into the abyss. Great glory was awaiting him, and he rejected all dark delusions that Kuwait should be restored to its former condition. He said that the heavens were closer than such delusions and that those who took part in the battle for honour and victory would be blessed with great fortune (that is what he wrote, it's in writing, I'm not making it up).

Sincere advice

Nevertheless, brothers and sisters, despite all these accusations, I still did not hesitate to give him further sincere advice and to address candid entreaties to him. I sent him another message through the Iraqi Ambassador, in which I explained that the Egyptian forces (after sending the forces, I immediately tried to make him understand that we were not conspiring against each other) had gone to Saudi Arabia at the request of Saudi Arabia (he says at the request of the Americans, but we do not take orders from America, we send our forces wherever we like ... this is an Arab country and we respond as a party to the Arab joint defence agreement. No

American came running asking us to send forces: all of you know that). No one else played any part in this. He should be the first to know that Egypt does not bow to pressure under any circumstances from any foreign State whatsoever. If Iraq was to be the object of a foreign or Arab invasion, our reaction would be the same. I reminded him that it was he who had told the Arab people of Iraq that his policy opposed interference in the internal affairs of any Arab State (he said this at a meeting of Arab lawyers, I think) and that it was he who had said that, if we saw Iraq's army attacking any Arab country, he urged us to muster our armies against Iraq to protect that Arab country. I begged him again and again to recognize that our advice was sincere and for the benefit of the Iraqi people, the Iraqi army and the Arab community as a whole, and that a friend tells you the truth rather than blindly condoning what you do. The international consensus was more overwhelming than he thought. I also begged him to announce a withdrawal from Kuwait, because this would change the situation for international public opinion. I reminded him that the Iraqi Revolution Command Council had announced after the invasion of Kuwait - on 4 August to be precise, the Saturday following the invasion - that the Iraqi forces would withdraw in a matter of days or weeks (flexibility) and that it was not in his interests to appear before the international community as being guilty of deception. No one would accept anything less than withdrawal. He did not reply to my message.

The real picture

But I did not despair either. When the date was set for United States President Bush's visit to the region, I called the Iraqi Ambassador into my office on the morning of Tuesday, 20 November, and spoke to him by telephone from my office (the secretaries' office because at the time I was busy with another interview) and asked him to consider the possibility of going to Baghdad to tell President Saddam that he must promise to withdraw. I would then be able to seek a way of saving his face and of sparing the region from the torments of a dreadful future. I warned him against reckoning on an internal split in America and Britain. (He was watching the CNN stations and could see the arguments. He simply could not believe that there would be a war. He did not realize it is a country of democracy and intelligence, and that that sort of thing was bound to happen, but that it is all over when the time comes for decision.) There would be internal divisions in the United States, Britain or any other Western State. It is the nature of the democratic system to give free rein to all opinions. I told him that those around him were not giving him a true picture and were only telling him what pleased him and what made him feel good. I tried to paint a true picture of the international situation because I was convinced that the Iraqi President was completely isolated from the facts of the international political situation. I stressed to him that he would not be able to make any change in the French position, if that was what he was expecting or counting on. And that the same would go for the position of the Soviet Union: this was entirely clear to us.

I told him that, despite the insolence and hyperbole emanating from Baghdad radio, the statements of senior Iraqi officials and the official Iraqi press, I was still sincerely and earnestly begging him to listen to the voice of reason, in order to save the Iraqi people and the Iraqi army from the scourges of war. It was

neither in our interests nor was it our right to expend these resources on behalf of an illegitimate cause. I requested that he get a reply to me before the American President left Cairo. (I thought there was still some hope that I might be able to talk, so as to make some effort, so as to avoid the catastrophes that would ensue.) However, I received no reply from him. It was as if I were crying in the wilderness. But I still did not despair. I instructed my office to call in the Iraqi Ambassador on the morning of 26 November 1990, whereupon he was given another message to the Iraqi President in which I told him that, after prolonged discussions with the American President, I believed even more strongly that the international community, as represented in every capital of East and West, North and South, was more than ever determined that there must be a withdrawal from Kuwait and that legitimate authority must be restored. I went on to say that, as a result of my discussions, I had determined that the military option was indeed on the table - I repeated this several times - and that it was being actively proposed by the major Powers which were permanent members of the Security Council. These nations were moving towards a decision which would authorize the use of military force in order to secure a withdrawal from Kuwait. I told him that, before such a decision was adopted, which would mean a real catastrophe, we could avoid it if we took a hold on matters and restored things to their previous condition.

I then received a written reply from the President of Iraq. It was a strange and contradictory reply, because he said in his letter that he did not rule out a dialogue with United States President George Bush but that he would not give him leave to interfere in Arab relations. Believe me, believe me, I still have not understood what he meant by that contradictory statement (I don't know what he wants). Believe me, I still do not understand what he means, and I have been racking my brains over it. He wants a dialogue with President Bush but he refuses to let Bush interfere in the Arab situation. (Heavens above, what is he going to talk about? American policy?) Is the subject of his talks with Bush going to be anything other than the question of the moment which is on all our minds?

The letter then began to accuse me of speeding up the onset of war. (Well, God knows, the American Secretary of State was telling me that we must hit him on 1 January. I begged him to give him another three months in the hope we might find some way out. He said I was conspiring against him and it turned out that he had said the same thing to the Americans. I know the meaning of war. We in Egypt have been through wars ... we know ... we know what wars do, and we could not be the first to speak of a war ... against whom? Against an Arab people? I feel pity for that Arab people ... I feel pity and on this occasion I salute our leaders ... the wars of '56, '67 and '73 ... when we find an Arab leader, our Egyptian leaders, even before the Revolution, if they see the people are threatened ... the citizens ... they cease fire and do not assert their leadership any further ... Nasser stopped ... when Sadat saw that the people were going to be killed, he stopped and looked after his country rather than seeking to enhance his own leadership.)

The letter then began to accuse me of speeding up the war and of trying to destroy Iraq. (How could this be? Can it be that things are secret abroad? Anyone who speaks to the world must be well aware that his words are transmitted. Every word I utter is carefully and meticulously weighed. If it was going to be

misunderstood, I would not say it. I have the interests of 55 million people under my charge.)

Then he said, literally, that he was expecting an explanation of this hostile position, of my endeavours to destroy Iraq. He also talked about the occupation of Kuwait, or the 19th province, as if he were occupying Basra or Baghdad. (He didn't say a single thing except to repeat that it was "our" territory, it was "ours", and we shouldn't waste our time, there would be no flexibility. He was completely unbending.) They hoped that Bush would not send his army into the abyss, otherwise Fahd would be involved in this mess, because victory was certain for the army of Iraq, which God had chosen as a sword (now we know) drawn against falsehood and its protagonists.

For the first time, his letter mentioned the question of Palestine as an issue which must be discussed along with all the other problems. At the end of his letter, he again accused me of being responsible for the fears which had overtaken King Fahd. (Would I frighten King Fahd? Does King Fahd need any guidance from me? He is his own man, he has his own resources, everything he needs, he has contacts and information coming into him.) So it was I who had made him call in the foreign troops. (For heaven's sake! Why would I tell King Fahd to call in foreign troops? I would never say such a thing. He works out his own position, he has his own relations, and he can ask for whatever he wants to. Between ourselves, if the Arab forces had been sent, things would quite frankly have been in even more of a mess. The Eastern Province would have been lost and we would be worse off than we are now, we would be fighting each other.) So I made him call in the foreign forces when I intimated to him - so he claims - that Iraqi armoured forces were approaching the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. (Heavens, do I have satellites flying over the Gulf for me to see, can I set up screens in Egypt and watch the army coming out of Iraq to Saudi Arabia? How would I know that? I don't have flying saucers or anything of the sort. I'm not watching the Gulf. I mean, how could I?) He said that since I was responsible ... since I was responsible ... and I asked him whether this was any justification. He asked me to try and arrange a meeting for him with King Fahd. (He lashes out at me and says it is so that I will correct the mistake - which in his opinion is a mistake - and let him sit down with King Fahd. Can I force King Fahd to sit down? Saudi Arabia is an independent sovereign State and has everything it needs.)

Despite these childish accusations, I did not get angry. Does anyone imagine I know something about Iraqi movements on the Saudi border without King Fahd knowing? Would Egypt be monitoring the Saudi border and observing the movements of Iraqi armoured forces? Does Egypt have satellites and the resources to monitor military movements in that part of the Arab world? Is it we who are accelerating the war? Do we want to destroy Iraq if it is we who are appealing night and day through all the media for him to protect the Iraqi people, the Iraqi army and Arab territory from the destruction of war and its devastating consequences? We are earnestly trying to make him see the reality of the international position, of which he has no idea or concept. I did not become angry, and I shall not despair. I understood that Saddam Hussein had an acute psychological problem. I therefore sent him a long written message on 30 November in which I set out all the facts for him and told him that I had not asked to be a channel of communication between him

and American President George Bush, or anyone else, because the Iraqi President himself had declared quite openly that he wanted to join in a direct dialogue with the American President and it was neither in our interests nor was it our wish to play the role of intermediary in this connection.

Goodwill

It was my intention to address him as the President of the fraternal State to which we had been linked in years past by expressions of truth, goodwill, a desire to protect fundamental national interests and rapprochement between Arab peoples which share the same objectives and destinies and face the same challenges. I told him in all candour that he should not give credence to those who told him that, when Egypt called for the Arab summit conference (these were rumours spread by people, but we know they are without any basis), it wanted to take revenge on Iraq because of positions which Iraq had adopted against Egypt in the past, specifically, at the 1979 Baghdad conference. (I was surprised. I had forgotten about the Baghdad conference. It's true, some tricks were played on us, and things broke down. They put pressure on some countries. But I swear I never gave that any thought, it didn't occur to me, I was simply trying to help.) I explained to him all the background for the convening of the conference, my contacts with King Hussein, our insistence that the crisis should be addressed in an Arab context and our warning against wrecking the process. If Egypt had any inclinations towards revenge, it would not have stood by Iraq during its war with Iran, nor would it have endeavoured to contain and settle the crisis with Kuwait in order to spare Iraq the terrors of a military confrontation whose dimensions are impossible to predict.

In my letter I told him that this willingness on his part to engage in a dialogue with the United States or Saudi Arabia was entirely inconsistent with his continued references to Kuwait as the 19th province and his assertion that to liberate it would be equivalent to occupying a part of Iraq's territory. (How he could say that to liberate Kuwait was equivalent to occupying Iraq, I do not understand ... that it was no different from occupying Basra or Baghdad. I told him plainly that this unity was concocted and imposed by force.) I told him this plainly and said he must be well aware that there was no State in the world which recognized Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. (Even those Arab circles which were showing support for Iraq's position, even those countries which took Iraq's side did so only because they had reservations about the foreign forces. Do you have any forces which can prevent them doing that?) Even those Arab circles which show support for the Iraqi position are sparing no effort to register their protests at this annexation and reaffirming their recognition of the State, regime and entity of Kuwait. Consequently, the necessary conditions have to be created in order for a dialogue to be held with the American President or with King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz, and the first of those conditions is to accept restoration of the situation as it was before the Iraqi invasion. Only then will the dialogue have any substance and shape. Otherwise, it will be a matter of confronting the international community with a fait accompli, which it will reject because of its inconsistency with recognized principles and values (all this before the war). I also told him in this letter that I would like to know if I was right in thinking that he

understood, deep down, that if we lost Kuwait today, we would be paving the way for the loss of other Arab countries, ensuring the loss for ever of the Palestinian people's rights, which we were struggling to restore and defend. Was this a situation which he could accept and live with?

At the end of my letter (which took up 22 pages), I said that I wanted to reiterate to him once again my willingness to engage in any effort or endeavour which might help us move forward. (His letters to me were discourteous. I replied to them and told myself it didn't matter: he was in a difficult situation and I would try to help him. There might be some hope.) If he wanted, I would go anywhere, to the ends of the world, provided that he showed some willingness to break the deadlock in the situation in a way that was consistent with the basic currents of Arab and international public opinion.

Frank advice

After this letter which I sent to Saddam Hussein on 30 November, I thought that he would take my frank advice and be impressed with the seriousness of the situation. But what happened? On 19 December 1990 I received a letter in which every line was filled with abuse, personal disparagement and denunciation of Egypt's position. Among the mildest of what he said was that we had one policy for public consumption and another in secret. He called it a two-faced policy. (Egypt has never been two-faced. Egypt has always, from the most ancient times, shown one face, on the side of what is right and legitimate. We do not intrigue or play games. We tell a wrongdoer that he is in the wrong, that he is mistaken, and saying this sometimes makes him angry, makes the wrongdoer angry.) Is it we who are insisting on deception? (Is it we who are doing the deceiving? Well, never mind.) Falsifying the facts ... (never mind, we are grateful to him) ... and misrepresenting events? God forbid. Again he denied that he had promised me he would not attack Kuwait. (On the day of the invasion I felt as if a knife had been stuck in my back. I was numbed and couldn't speak until sunset. I couldn't believe that such a thing would happen between Heads of State, between one country and another.) He then referred to one highly significant occurrence - this is exactly how he expressed it - saying the Arab leaders who visited him at that time (meaning the period just before the invasion) had drawn the unequivocal conclusion that the situation was extremely ominous. (What he is saying is that those leaders who visited him before the invasion operation, in that time of turmoil, knew that the situation between him and Kuwait was critical and understood that he was going to invade Kuwait. We never heard anything about that.) I have no need to tell you which Arab leaders visited Saddam Hussein during that period and gained the unequivocal impression that the situation was extremely ominous: nevertheless, they remained silent and it seemed to the entire world that they had been surprised by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

He then again began to accuse us of trying to obstruct any settlement with Kuwait. (What I am saying is all written down in his letters. I am not drawing conclusions, making it up or inventing words. I am just telling you exactly what he said in his letter ... and the letters are to hand.) He again began to accuse us of trying to obstruct any settlement with Kuwait. (Let us go back again to the

summit conference which I proposed. No one else proposed it, it was I who spoke of a summit. It was just for them to give me the nod and tell me they were willing, then I would put on a big act in order to save his face, provided that he withdrew. When they turned down the two points, I refused to call for the summit. I told him to convene it himself. And he thinks that I wrecked the chances of solution. What solution?)

Had he not been insisting since the very beginning, all the time, that Kuwait was just like Basra and that any attack on Kuwait was tantamount to an attack on Iraq? Then he again accused us of trying to obstruct any settlement with Kuwait because we asked him to make a commitment - before convening the mini-summit which I had suggested should be held in Jeddah - to withdraw from Kuwait and not to interfere with the restoration of legitimate authority. When I suggested this summit, I contacted King Fahd. (I said: "Your Majesty, would you have any objection if we find out from this man privately whether he is willing to withdraw and restore legitimate authority? Would you mind if we met in Jeddah and set up a nice scenario in order to get him out of this crisis with his dignity intact, for the sake of the Iraqi people?" He said he had no objection. But if they didn't agree, it would look as if we were all approving the occupation. No one would agree or accept an invitation at all. It would be just as if people called for a summit but no one paid any heed.) Then he went back and started all his accusations over again: we were responsible for spreading word of a trumped-up Iraqi threat whereby Iraq had moved up its forces.

That was what he kept repeating. We are not the ones who say there are troops, it's the satellites which gave that information. We heard about it later and asked whether it was true. They said yes, it's true. Saudi Arabia asked for forces right away and made preparations out of fear that he would occupy the Eastern Province. If he had occupied the Eastern Province, the disaster would have been greater. There would have been a real catastrophe. (Thank God it was only this and we can still try to do something.)

Speaking the truth

He then began to reproach us with the argument that it was the Gulf Cooperation Council which had brought Egypt back into the Arab community. If it had not been for the efforts made by Iraq and other brothers (meaning members of the Council), Egypt's return to the League of Arab States would never have happened. I sent a letter thanking him and told him I knew he had made efforts and was grateful to him for that, but this did not mean I should not tell the truth, even if it was against a friend and brother. Then he was surprised that I should refuse to link the occupation of Kuwait to regional issues. (This is play-acting. What did he say once? We would begin with the question of Palestine and forget about the subject of Kuwait until the occupation had really taken hold. He knew that there were people who would raise many objections about the question of Palestine. He claimed that what we had done for the Palestinian cause was a joke, that we had done nothing at all. In fact it was he who just sat and never opened his mouth.) He described the Egyptian struggle to solve the question of Palestine (literally the way he says it in his letter) as a joke and said that it was our

intention throughout the years to water down the whole question ... (How can they start taking up this cause now when they never said anything about it before? They only began to talk after they occupied Kuwait) ... and to put pressure on the Palestinians to give up their rights. Us put pressure on the Palestinians? If that's what they say, I say God forgive them, tomorrow they will find out who supports them, who has stood with them and who will support them. Then they will learn.

So he said he rejected the idea and then ...

[A member interrupted the President and said: "He says that he will liberate it!" The President replied and continued.]

He will liberate it with Saddam's missiles. He said he rejected any dialogue with Saudi Arabia. (This is really strange: he wanted dialogue before. Does he reject the dialogue or does he want it? Shall we open the door or close and lock it?) He said he rejected any dialogue with Saudi Arabia, and it would be enough for the whole world to reveal the true nature of those who cooperated with America. (We shall play along with those who cooperate with America and those who cooperate with the Soviet Union, so we swing in every direction! Every State looks after its interests, every State is sovereign and has its own dignity. We cooperate with all States - America, Russia, France and all countries of the world - because that is in our interests. But no one violates Egyptian sovereignty.)

He also rejects any dialogue with America, even if it leads to a solution. (Heavens above! What he says is inconsistent from beginning to end.) But he does want Arab-Arab dialogue (because he knows he can throw out a few insults: the people are basically polite and will be embarrassed, so they will be able to keep their territory and sleep in peace without anyone intervening from outside). I fail to understand how there can be an Arab-Arab dialogue if, in his last letter, he refuses any dialogue with Saudi Arabia, entirely denies the existence of Kuwait and rejects us because we are cooperating with Bush.

We are cooperating with Bush, with Mitterrand, with Andreotti, with Kohl, with Kaifu, with Kaunda and with everywhere in the world. Fine, so reject us because of all those: stay in isolation and sit on your own, and maybe God will give you inspiration!

He also rejects the Gulf States and Syria, so who does he want to talk to? Was the Arab summit conference not the natural forum for Arab-Arab dialogue and a solution of the crisis under an Arab umbrella, leaving no opportunity for international intervention? But what use is it talking to this crude individual who has led his people and army into a violent war without any legitimate justification and propelled the whole region into the appalling situation which we are now experiencing?

Perhaps you will agree with me, brothers and sisters, that this last letter from the Iraqi President clearly demonstrates that the man is living in another world, that what he says is entirely inconsistent and is based only on insults, slanders and abuse.

I decided to reply to him in a full-length letter comprising 44 pages, refuting his assertions one by one in the eyes of history. (He writes these letters to me so that he can put something on record against me in the eyes of history. I say to him no, go ahead, here is history, I challenge you to find one word that is not a true reflection of history.) In this way I tried with all the energy at my disposal to put him truly in the picture and to warn him for the hundredth time of the dangers and disasters towards which, by his stubbornness and persistent wrongdoing, he was propelling our Arab world, defying the international community, for no purpose other than to display heroism where there was no place for it. (For heaven's sake, I have been sending him so many appeals, 26 appeals, and about six letters. I say to him, I beseech you, I beg you. No one else tried so hard with him. I said I was ready to go to any part of the world for him as an intermediary but no one would accept what he was doing.) I sent a letter to him on 29 December, telling him quite clearly that we thought he would be above adopting a position such as that adopted by Israel after it occupied part of the territory of neighbouring Arab countries in June 1967. It began to talk of negotiation without prior conditions, but the international community turned it down and adopted resolution 242 on 22 November 1967, which said that territory could not be seized by force and called for Israel's withdrawal from the territory which it had occupied in the course of the latest conflict. As I told him, if on dozens of occasions in the months which had elapsed since the catastrophe of the invasion he had reasserted that he considered the occupation of Kuwait to be final and irrevocable under any circumstances, and that Kuwait had become the 19th province of Iraq, was there - after saying that - any room for negotiation without prior conditions? I said one last thing to him in my letter: it would be good for all of us if history were to record that you preserved the security and safety of the Arab community, prevented the blood of its sons from being shed and saved Arab land from becoming a theatre for the last great war to be seen by the world in the twentieth century. This solution is still open to us, despite all that has happened.

Brothers and sisters, you know everything that happened after and during that time. Over and over again he rejected the mediation of the Soviet Union and is continuing to do so even now. He rejected France's mediation. A good initiative was emerging but he rejected it. He rejected Germany's mediation ... he rejected it again ... he rejected Britain's mediation, he rejected Austria's mediation ... he rejected Algeria's mediation ... he rejected other Arab intermediaries, he rejected the mediation of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, he rejected mediation by political leaders from all parts of the world. Everyone advised him to withdraw and everyone warned him against the frightful consequences of war, but he insisted on rejecting them: he even insisted, in all his conversations with them, that the word "withdrawal" should not be mentioned at all. He chose to remain alone.

I shall tell you of a little incident which occurred with a Head of State who went to see him. He told him the situation was dangerous and that he must withdraw. The forces seemed overwhelming, even before 15 January. He replied that he would not, and mentioned Nasser. I don't know how he could compare himself with Nasser. Nasser was not like him at all. He was a man who liberated peoples and stood up for what was right. He did not subject them to occupation.

Thank God no Egyptian outside his country would allow his former leaders to be criticized. He might criticize his own leader inside his country, but no Egyptian citizen would allow the leader of his country to be criticized beyond Egypt's borders. So what did he say to him?

In 1956, Nasser was beaten and defeated but he was still leader. Yes, it was a question of continuing to assert leadership even though people were dying. When Nasser saw the danger, he stopped the war. When he saw that people would die in 1967, he saved the lives of his people. What other national leader would go on if you told him that war was dangerous? Someone was making a statement yesterday, no. An Egyptian leader looks after his people and his country and does not want to lose a single individual unless he absolutely has to.

But for him the whole world is in the wrong and has to back down in the face of his tyranny and violence, which will turn the world into an inferno of destruction and heaps of skulls (he knows it too).

Brothers and sisters, members of the National Assembly and the Shura Council, we also find those who allege, either at press conferences or in printed statements distributed here and there, that Saddam Hussein agreed to withdraw on 5 August. (Did they find anything? So why didn't he withdraw? So when you spoke of a summit conference to secure withdrawal, why didn't you tell us he agreed? Why didn't you tell us? If you didn't tell us, it was treachery. I wouldn't have arranged a summit conference, and that's it. But, now it's all over, you come and tell me that he agreed and was going to withdraw. Fine, let him withdraw. He says that, when we kept appealing, they got nervous. They got nervous! Are we dealing with such little people? If I get nervous, do I forsake my country, forsake my people and forsake my army? What sort of nervousness is this? It's very odd.) Saddam Hussein agreed to withdraw on 5 August and the Arab summit conference placed obstacles in the way of an Arab solution. (Well, I tell you, if I am in a difficult position - summit or no summit - I take my decision to withdraw so as to save the lives of my people, to save my country, my citizens, my equipment and the future of my country. It goes without saying. As soon as any national leader who loves his country sees danger threatening his people, he has to stop immediately: I concede and go back 600 million times in order to prevent the death of a citizen.)

So what is this? I am dragging a million behind me like this, I am exposing my people to danger just because I'm stubborn? How in the world can anyone say that? Brothers, I do not want to comment on this sort of farcical nonsense, which he is trying to use as a way of shirking responsibility for this bitter situation. We have made exhaustive and superhuman efforts to prevent this situation arising. I do not want to speak of those hypocritical and fickle circles which have chosen to play with fire and fan the flames, so that the whole world is trying to put out the fire and opt for peace. Misleading cries have been raised by those who have allowed their consciences to portray Kuwait's occupation as an Islamic act which must be blessed by Islamic peoples and protected from the enemies of Islam and Muslims. What sort of talk is this? When has Islam authorized the invasion of an Islamic land and the terrorization of its people by plunder, looting, and the seizure and dispersal of its wealth? Since when have these proud devotees of Islam looked to Saddam Hussein to protect the sanctuary of Islam? Since he invaded

Kuwait? Despite the fact that they accused him openly ... accused him of being a puppet and an enemy of Islam and of violating its teachings when he entered the war with Iran? Is not Kuwait an Islamic country like Iran? Is it not, moreover, an Arab country with which we share national as well as spiritual ties? Is not the difference even greater because Kuwait is a small State which represented no threat to anyone at all and of which it is impossible to say that it disturbed the security of the Arab community?

Due respect for holy territory

Are these people, who have executed Kuwaitis with bullets and on the gallows, looted their homes and children's nurseries, disgraced and defiled them, not Muslims? Does Islam permit any individual to destroy a Muslim Arab people which lives alongside it as a good neighbour on the best of terms or to expose his people, its country and achievements to danger? What is all this for? Is it to say that he challenged the entire world? Are neither the substance nor the reasons for this challenge of any consequence? Are we in a hall of ephemeral heroes or are we thinking of the self-determination of peoples and the security of the region as a whole, which embraces millions of Arabs and Muslims?

If they put it about that the foreign force has defiled holy territory, when in fact it - together with the Arab and Islamic forces - is stationed hundreds of miles away from the holy places, then is the launching of Iraqi missiles at Saudi cities in order to destroy them a legally and morally permissible act? Does that not constitute an assault on the sanctity of this territory? Are there not living in this territory Muslims whose peaceful homes have been targeted by missiles with a view to destroying those houses and killing the women and children inside them?

Does this constitute due respect for holy territory, and was the measure to invade Saudi territory and to move Iraqi armed forces up to its border on the day Kuwait was invaded an Islamic act or a demonstration of care and respect for holy territory?

Are the Muslim Kuwaitis and Saudis who are now defending their lands and homes waging a religious war against Islam and the Muslims? Are the forces of the Islamic States, which have been deployed in their tens of thousands and merged with the liberation forces, also foreign forces waging a religious war against Muslims?

I do not know why these prattlers do not direct their voices and appeals to the ruler of Iraq and ask him to withdraw from Kuwait and bring down the curtain on this tragedy, which is unparalleled in Arab history since the time of the great schism. In what way is it Islamic to see a wrongdoer before your eyes advocating criminal deeds and bloodshed and then hypocritically to propagate what he says as the truth, as the defence of Islam and the Muslims?

Brothers, we are living through decisive days which dictate that men must speak and act as men. With every day that passes, the losses of the Arab community become ever greater. Wake up to the word of truth, set aside the deception of the masses and do not evade the facts, for it is a matter of grave responsibility. The catastrophe which has overtaken the Arab world is both bitter and bloody.

The facts show that it is Saddam Hussein who, by his invasion of an independent sovereign Arab State and terrorization of an Arab Muslim people, is responsible for everything that is now occurring. It is even now still possible for him to halt the tragedy and to put an end to the catastrophe, but he even now prefers destruction and devastation and rejects peace initiatives. The latest of these was the initiative of Soviet President Gorbachev, in which he asked him to state his intention of withdrawing in order that the war might stop. But the ruler of Iraq prefers to sacrifice his people and his army, rather than to retreat to the position of right.

Awakening to patriotic conscience

Permit me here to address some of those who do not grasp the meaning of national responsibility in these critical times. I say to them, no matter how few they are, that they must look to their patriotic conscience. I say they should look to their patriotic conscience.

If you choose to ignore that our Egyptian forces on the front are doing their duty, be aware that this is the patriotic commitment you should make. Because the people - the whole people - chooses to recognize this fact and is standing by its armed forces in a single line, as a single shield and a single umbrella. Beware against slipping too far away from this patriotic duty which draws the fine line between light and darkness, between commitment and negligence, between trust and betrayal of trust.

There were many differences among the various parties and blocs in the United States, Britain, France, Italy and other countries before the decision on military intervention was taken (not to send the troops, no, on military intervention). Their parliamentary stages were filled with different opinions, but all that stopped when the State took its decision and everyone rallied around and cast all their votes in favour of their Governments. This is the way democracy works: it knows the meaning of patriotic commitment and the meaning of national dignity.

The call to support Islam is no less deceitful than the master of Baghdad's call for a solution of the Palestinian question as a precondition for any discussion of withdrawal from Kuwait. In fact, he never even said that he would withdraw if the question of Palestine was solved. This is disgraceful deception, just stirring up feelings and misleading Arab public opinion and claiming to take the cause of the Palestinian people to heart. Did the ruler of Iraq grab the Islamic Arab State of Kuwait in order to solve the Palestine issue? Did he not declare - and does he not continue to declare - that Kuwait is Iraqi territory and that he has restored it by force to its natural condition? So what about the question of Palestine? How did it suddenly come to the surface as a part of the crisis and the problem?

Petty intrigues in connection with major issues always, inevitably, lead to loss of life and the devastation and destruction of war.

Arab public opinion cannot be deceived by the firing of a few missiles at Israeli cities. (Good heavens, a few missiles, thirteen-and-a-half billion is what is needed, Patriot missiles and all that ... arms ... a missile which works like a firecracker and is not effective at all. We know that very well. He himself admitted it when I went to see him the first time: he told me the missile they launched was stronger than that because its range was short. He said that was nonsense, it made a hole. If I had known, I wouldn't have been afraid of it. He made it smaller and is using it to strike with. Fine, strike. You can strike but what good will it do you?)

In a battle which has nothing whatsoever to do with the struggle of the Arab people in Palestine, can anyone forget that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait turned the eyes of the world away from the Palestinian people's struggle and its uprising against the Israeli occupation?

Such provocative acts as these - which are entirely outside the framework of faithful plans to back the Palestinian people's right to liberate its occupied territory, establish its own State and express its own identity as a nation and a civilization - simply enable Israel to obtain broader international sympathy, to raise more funds and to obtain more modern and sophisticated weapons. This is what happens. And yet the mouthpieces of hypocrisy declare that Israeli forces have been transferred to Saudi Arabia to take part in the war.

(To say this is just cheap. They say it in order to complicate things. Israel has remained quiet and is not doing anything.) All these are outright lies, designed simply to stir up feelings and to inflame Arab passions.

What is Iraq's position on the question of Palestine?

What has it done?

What has Iraq's position been on the question of Palestine between 1948 and now? (We lost so much for the sake of the Palestinian cause. Can you forget the debts which we incurred because of our spending on the Palestinian cause? He went and gobbled up Kuwait and said he was doing it to save Palestine. So I go to the west in order to free the east. If you want to free the east, go east. Show us your skill in the east.) What has Iraq's position been on the question of Palestine between 1948 and now? What role did Iraq play in the wars of '56, '67 and '73?

What did Saddam Hussein do after Israel destroyed the Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1982? (Not a word ... not a word, not an utterance ... they insulted Egypt ... Israel struck the reactor ... but they insult us.) These are big questions to which we find no clear answer. Did Iraq not enter a savage war with Iran which lasted for eight years after telling the Arab community that it was protecting the eastern gate and defending its national security? Then now he goes and stretches out the hand of friendship, goodwill and good-neighbourliness to Iran and, with one stroke of the pen, gives up all the demands for the sake of which he went to war. (He was fighting Iran in order to protect the eastern gate ... it ended with Iran

gobbling up the eastern gate.) The Iraqi President thought he could put Egypt and the other Arab States which reject his occupation of Kuwait in a predicament if he launched missiles against Israel. (No, I had a suggestion when I made my appeal to him on 31 December. I said let's hope they have some sense and consider withdrawal today. If they withdraw, then the world will be in a fix because the world doesn't want him to keep all his weapons. That would have confused the entire world. But among those aides of his ... so mediocre ... launch a missile here ... drop a bomb there ... fine, and then? And then? I spoke to him in all faith and sincerity ... I spoke by telephone ... I did the impossible ... what could not be done ... it wasn't any use.)

Our mission is to abide by international legitimacy

Permit me to reiterate that this is an attempt to confuse the issue and to blur the enormous difference between what is right and what is wrong. Our mission is to liberate Kuwait and to restore its legitimate authority, to return its people to their territory and to their State, which is a member of the League of Arab States and the United Nations.

Our mission is to abide by the forces of international and Arab legitimacy, which with equal conviction reject the occupation by military force on the part of one State of the territory of another independent sovereign State.

Our mission is to protect a peace-loving Arab State from violence inflicted by a hostile usurper Arab State. Intrigues and deception will not cause us to miscalculate our position or to accept some spurious theory whereby Iraq is supposed to have launched its assault on Kuwait in order to liberate Palestine. We need no certificate from anyone to give proof of our historic role of commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people.

The great people of Egypt has embarked on four wars and sacrificed tens of thousands of its most virtuous men. It has sacrificed millions, billions indeed, of its limited resources for the sake of the Palestinian people's cause, and our efforts in the battle to attain peace and to ensure enjoyment of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination have not ceased even for one day. Not for one day have we hesitated to support the struggle of the Palestinian people to recover its legitimate rights, at every stage of that struggle.

The question of Palestine: a top priority after the war

So let us have no more artificial hyperbole in the name of the Palestinian cause ... waving Uthman's blood-covered shirt ... let us work sincerely and earnestly, and without any pretensions or exaggeration, to place that cause in the forefront of international priorities after the war in the Gulf is over. Let us prove that Arabs are serious and not frivolous, that they use slogans only if they believe in a cause, are committed to its victory and prepared to sacrifice themselves along the way.

This was the commitment made by America's President Bush to me and to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Fahd Bin Abdul-Aziz. The same commitment was made to me by European leaders, both in the East and in the West, with whom we have had intensive contacts in this regard. Their positions have thus approached the position which we have adopted throughout the past years. We obtained unanimous support for it from the centuries-old African community as well as from friendly Asian States and all the countries of the third world and the non-aligned movement.

Looking forward to real peace

Brothers and sisters, we are looking forward to real peace in our Arab territory after the end of this tragedy, a peace which will eliminate the dreadful consequences of the war caused by the Iraqi President's stubbornness and insistence on throwing his people into a battle which cannot serve the purposes of - or ward off any harm from - any Arab and Muslim people. It is not our concern that Saddam Hussein should disappear ... the Iraqi people, in all its nobility and civilization, remains and will not disappear. The Iraqi people has endured much, very much ... it has endured the sufferings of the eight-year war without reaping anything from it except the blood of its martyrs in every Iraqi household, whether great or small. It has endured a life which offers the bare minimum of life's requirements. It is the people of a nation rich in resources, although these enormous resources, which amount to hundreds of billions, have been depleted in ephemeral adventures which are of no use to anyone.

Egypt in its entirety stands by the people of Iraq. Egypt in its entirety will not for one day abandon the people of Iraq. A noble Arab people shall not be judged in the same way as the actions of a leadership which imposed its will on that people, forced its authority over that people's fate and attempted to take control of the destinies of the Arab community without any legitimate justification.

It never occurred to any Arab that an Arab army would occupy a fraternal Arab State and then proceed to threaten Arab peoples in the Gulf region, which is of such enormous strategic importance. Nor did they imagine that they needed anyone to protect them against their brothers.

There is not a single political leader in the world, no head of any major or minor State, who failed to make every effort possible to dissuade the ruler of Iraq from his decision.

No logic can equate this insistence on occupying a small State with the determination of the international community to liberate that State by military force, thus expanding the arena of the war to Iraqi territory, where the military force supporting the occupation forces is stationed. Nevertheless, despite all this, I declare from this rostrum, on behalf of the people of Egypt and the Egyptian army, that even now we are not giving up our participation in international efforts which might halt the remaining phases of this tragedy, if the Iraqi leadership decides to prevent bloodshed, to go back to what is right and to put an end to the sufferings of the Iraqi people and of all the peoples of the Arab community.

I advise whomsoever it may concern inside Iraq that political missiles may elicit support from those whom they deceive, but they do not win wars.

The Iraqi military apparatus is not the property of one individual. It is the shield of the people in protecting its resources and constituent elements for the purpose of construction, not destruction and annihilation. Lives are sacrificed and blood is shed in response to an appeal to defend one's territory and honour. When land is occupied by a usurper, there is no call to support the individual who commits aggression against territory and honour, who exposes his people and his army to destruction.

We have greater affection for the people of Iraq, the land of Iraq, the interests of Iraq and the future of Iraq than do those who demonstrate in its favour and profess to support it.

We were the first to call for an end to this unjust war which began on that fateful day last August, and for the containment of its complications and dangerous negative implications for Iraq and all Arab and Islamic peoples.

We do not make this appeal by way of neglect for the rights of Iraq or concession of any lawful interest.

All that we ask for and are trying to achieve is Iraq's agreement to implement the resolution adopted by the Cairo summit conference and Security Council resolution 660 (1990), which both insist on Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and non-interference with the restoration of legitimate authority. That is inevitable. Anyone who calls for anything other than that will not receive any attention whatsoever from the international community, because the wheel of war has begun to turn and can be stopped only by withdrawal and the restoration of legitimate authority.

Subsequently, we shall endeavour to consult and coordinate with the parties concerned in order to ensure an Arab framework and international response to a formula which will preserve Iraq's dignity and maintain its right to live in peace and security, thus putting an end to this murderous war.

The Arab community is a single entity

Brothers and sisters, we stand firmly resolute against the ambitions of those who seek to damage the well-being of Iraq and to threaten its territorial integrity. We reject any calls for revenge against Iraq, because it is the people which will suffer and bear the costs, because desires for revenge blind people's eyes to the future and obstruct a vision of the broad horizons which that future opens up for peoples, on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

The Egyptian vision is based on the preservation of Iraq and Kuwait alike. We do not accept the logic whereby the existence of either one of these two fraternal States constitutes a threat to the other, nor do we believe that one must choose between Iraq and Kuwait. We are, together with both States, members of the great

Arab family and of the Islamic community, graced with the principles of Islam and observing its values and boundaries.

We do not favour either side at the expense of the other in order to serve any interest or caprice. Instead, we uphold what we believe to be right and we reject what is unjust and wrong. We respect the line which God has drawn between right and wrong, between what is lawful and what is unlawful.

Brothers and sisters, I know that all our hearts are gripped by sorrow, but our strength is that we follow the symbols of freedom, truth and light ... the salvation of our brethren ... commitment to our creed, principle and honour rather than hiding behind misdeeds and crime. We therefore have before us a great struggle to ensure security and stability throughout the Arab world and to bring about a comprehensive peace which will maintain each people's sovereignty and right to self-determination, to strive for the establishment of solid Arab national security systems in the broadest sense and close economic cooperation for the purposes of construction and development and to accompany the new world order in its political, economic and social development.

Cooperation on Arab security must mean only true Arab cooperation. Set aside the nonsense spoken by those who spread lies. Ours is a not a zone of influence for anyone, and we shall not allow the region to be subject to any sort of influence. Our relations with every State in the world are based on full respect for sovereignty and appreciation of joint interests: they will always remain that way.

Democracy is our way of life

These are the principles which are rooted in us: they do not vary and they do not assume different masks to suit events. Democracy is our way of life today, tomorrow, and throughout the future. National and patriotic commitment is the rule in our Arab, Islamic and international relations, and we have chosen that it should be so on the basis of faith, conviction and assurance. All this increases our burdens and gives us heavier responsibilities, but that is how Egypt is ... Egypt does not stoop or betray ... Egypt the greatest and strongest of fortresses ... Egypt, the home of the noble at a time when principles of honour and loyalty fall like autumn leaves in the shadow of slogans brandished by opportunists and seekers of spurious glory ... this same Egypt expressed itself courageously in every city, village and quarter as soon as the ruthless Iraqi invasion of a fraternal Arab country had taken place.

Egypt, brothers and sisters, that same Egypt which received the citizens of Kuwait in its hearts before its houses ... which refused those hands that proffered bribes in the hope that it would turn a blind eye, lower its voice or simply play no part in addressing the issue.

Egypt: history, civilization and pioneering spirit

We rebuffed those hands and turned deaf ears to the talk of bribery. The voice of Egypt rose echoing with the word of truth, the principle of honour and respect for human rights. We did not bargain or intrigue but kept our position in line with our words, and our words in line with our position, lofty, glowing and proud. We do not seek to make deals over issues, to gamble with the fates of peoples or to adopt fanciful positions in order to ward off suspicions, to cover up the facts, out of fear of the voices of sedition or in an attempt to win support whether right or wrong. Our role is the same from the first act until the last. Our role has been imposed on us by our history of civilization and pioneering spirit, a history forged by our national and patriotic responsibility in honour, purity and faith. Our role bears witness that we do not change our skins or assume different masks to suit changing intentions or aspirations. We have no need of any mask because we do not act unless we are convinced. Our minds faithfully translate what is in our breasts and our breasts are full of faith, of reproachless true Islam, of the call to mutual compassion, solidarity and respect for rights and that which is inviolable. Our life is one of sincerity before God Almighty, because sincerity with oneself yields truth, charity and peace.

To conclude my testimony before history, brothers and sisters, I repeat my salutations to Egypt's knights and shields, the members of its armed forces, and I address a prayer from the depths of my heart and soul to the Almighty Creator to extricate the Arab community from this ordeal with hearts cleansed by these momentous events and with minds to which the way has been made clear for the construction of life, in order that we may begin a new phase of integrated Arab construction with respect for human rights, ensuring a secure and dignified life for every Arab family in just and lasting peace.

"To God belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and of the earth; and God is powerful over everything."

"O believers, be patient, and vie you in patience; be steadfast; fear God; haply so you will prosper."

Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.